

# A Block Diagram Compiler

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*A computer program known as BLODI, which accepts for an input a source program written in the BLODI language, is described. The BLODI source language corresponds closely to an engineer's block diagram of a circuit and is easily learned, even by persons not familiar with computing machines. The input code consists essentially of designating the connectivity of a number of boxes drawn from an alphabet of about 30 types. These types include amplifiers, delay lines, counters, etc., which are familiar to designers of electronic circuits. The principles of the compiler are explained and applications are discussed.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

This paper describes a computer program known as BLODI (BLOCK Diagram compiler). BLODI accepts for an input a source program written in the BLODI language, which corresponds closely to an engineer's block diagram of a circuit, and produces a machine program to simulate the circuit. BLODI has been written for both the IBM 704 and 7090 machines, and has been in use at Bell Telephone Laboratories for several months. Generally speaking, there are two situations in which it can be used profitably. One arises when a person with no knowledge of machine coding wishes to program his own problem. In this case, the BLODI language is much easier to learn than Fortran or SAP. There are, in addition, certain problems involving a rather smooth flow of data which can be most easily coded in BLODI, even by an experienced programmer.

It is rather easy to estimate the efficiency of an object program produced by BLODI. Thus a person with no knowledge of computing machines can often tell if he should code his problem in BLODI or seek the aid of an experienced programmer. This will be discussed in Section V.

BLODI was written to lighten the programming burden in problems concerning the simulation of signal-processing devices. It has the added

advantage of keeping the engineer who invents such a device in close communication with the computing machine by eliminating the middle-man (expert programmer).

## II. BLOCK DIAGRAM OF SAMPLED (OR PULSE) SYSTEMS

The circuits\* which we wish to consider here are limited to combinations of devices which accept pulses as inputs and yield pulses as outputs. While the pulses may have arbitrary sizes within certain limits, they must all occur at multiples of a fixed clock time. In general, the output of one of the devices (or boxes) can depend on the present and all past input pulses. A box whose output is independent of the current input pulse or pulses is called a *delaying-type box*. In the current form of the compiler the only delaying-type box is a simple delay line. In addition to these boxes, the circuit may have one or more ultimate outputs and original inputs. A *circuit* then means a number of boxes, ultimate outputs, and original inputs connected in such a way that the output of any box is connected to one or more inputs to boxes and ultimate outputs, and each input to a box is connected to an output from a box or an original input. (We limit ourselves to boxes with a single output.)

A *closed loop* is a path that starts from any point, goes only through connected boxes in the direction of the pulses (i.e., input to output), and returns to its starting point. A circuit which does not contain a closed loop with no delaying-type boxes will be called an *admissible circuit*. The compiler will reject any block diagram which does not describe an admissible circuit. It is easy to see that if the pulse heights were limited to a finite number of values (as they are, of course, in the machine simulation) then an admissible circuit would be a finite-state machine. On the other hand, there is no way to interpret a block diagram corresponding to a nonadmissible circuit. To be sure, one could connect physical boxes in such a manner and something would happen. The analysis, however, would involve the precise transient behavior of the devices within the pulse width — information which is not available to the compiler.

In addition to simulating pulse circuits, the compiler may be used to simulate continuous circuits whose inputs and outputs are bandlimited time functions. One must first design a pulse circuit whose output pulses would correspond to the sample values of the desired output. Extreme

\* For clarity the machine being simulated will be called the *circuit*. Its description in a certain canonical form will be called the *block diagram*. The word *machine* will always mean the IBM 704 EDPS (or 7090 EDPS).

care must be exercised here; for example, an accumulator (a device whose output is the sum of all previous input pulses) is not equivalent to an integrator. Certain continuous circuits (especially nonlinear ones) are extremely difficult to translate into pulse form. A simple circuit which is difficult to simulate on a machine (with or without the use of this compiler) is the following: Let a bandlimited input signal be connected to a full-wave rectifier, and this to a low-pass filter to return the signal to the original bandwidth.

We will see later that (with a trivial exception) the compiler can be used to simulate any admissible circuit composed of boxes drawn from a fixed list or stockpile. The boxes may have only one output (which may go to several places, however) and at most four inputs. The first constraint is no real restriction, but the second one is.\* We know of no example in signal processing where a general function of more than four variables that cannot be expressed as combinations of functions of four or less variables is needed. In fact, two inputs to each box would probably be adequate but slightly awkward.

### III. THE BLODI LANGUAGE

A BLODI source program is punched on standard SHARE symbolic cards in either the FAP (7090) or SAP (704) format. In general, each card corresponds to one box in the circuit; there is, however, a provision made for continuing a description of a box to the next card. The location field (columns 1 through 6) is either blank or contains the name assigned the box by the programmer. (If a box is to have any inputs, it must have a name.) The operation code field (columns 8 through 10) contains the type of box. Parameters (such as gain of an amplifier) and output connections are separated by commas and listed consecutively starting in column 12 (or column 16 for the 7090 format). The various inputs to the same box are designated by a fraction bar and numeral following the name of the box. Example:

UV AMP 5.28, XY, Z/2

Box UV is an amplifier with a gain of 5.28 which feeds box XY (first input) and the second input of box Z.

A list of all the available box types appears in Table I. Note that INP may be thought of as a box which generates signals spontaneously; actually it obtains its input from a tape designated as a parameter. Simi-

\* Technically speaking, this is not true. A circuit could be designed corresponding to any finite state machine. However, we consider that it is not in the proper spirit to take advantage of the fact that the pulse heights are limited to  $2^{36}$  values.

TABLE I — ALL THE TYPES OF BOXES WHICH ARE RECOGNIZED BY  
THE COMPILER

Type	Function	Inputs	Parameters
DEL	Delay	Signal	Number of units delay
AMP	Amplifier	Signal	Gain
ADR	Adder	1-4 Signals	None
SUB	Subtractor	+ Input - Input	None
MAX	Maximum circuit	1-4 Signals	None
MIN	Minimum circuit	1-4 Signals	None
CLP	Positive clipper	Signal	Clipping level
CLN	Negative clipper	Signal	Clipping level
SCL	Symmetric clipper	Signal	Clipping level
FWR	Full-wave rectifier	Signal	None
BAT	Battery or bias	(Signal)	Bias
MRP	Multiplier	2 Signals	None
DIV	Divider	Dividend Divisor	None
SQT	Square rooter	Signal	None
ACC	Accumulator	Signal	Gain
FLT	Transversal filter	Signal	Number of taps Delay per tap Gains
SLF	Symmetric filter	Signal	Number of taps Delay per tap Gains
AFL	Antisymmetric filter	Signal	Number of taps Delay per tap Gains
QNT	Quantizer	Signal	Number of levels Levels
LQT	Linear quantizer	Signal	Step size
SMP	Sampler	Signal	Period Quiescent level Initial phase
HLD	Sample and hold	Signal; control	Threshold
CNT	Counter	Signal	Countdown factor Threshold Active level Passive level Initial phase
DTS	Double-throw switch	Control; 2 signals	Threshold
FLF	Flip-flop	Signal	Low threshold High threshold Low state output High state output
PLS	Pulser	Control	Threshold Pulse length Pulse level Quiescent level
COS	Cosine generator	None	Period Phase Amplitude
GEN	Function generator	None	Period Sample values
WNG	Noise generator	None	Standard deviation
PRT	Printer	Control; 3 signals	Threshold Record Limit



TABLE I — (Continued)

Type	Function	Inputs	Parameters
INP	Input	None	Tape number File maximum Samples per record Record maximum Start printing Stop printing
OUT	Output	Signal	Tape number File maximum Samples per record Record maximum Start printing Stop printing
END	Last card of source program		

larly, OUT causes the signal appearing on its input lead to be written on the designated tape. A circuit may have several inputs and outputs. END is not a box at all but signifies the end of the source program. In addition to the types listed, it is possible for a programmer to create types of his own invention by supplying subroutines written in basic machine language. It is also quite easy to change the basic input-output programs used by BLODI to handle arbitrary tape formats.

#### IV. PRINCIPLE OF OPERATION

An object program produced by the compiler consists of three parts:

- (a) the *prefix*, which sets up the logic for the main loop;
- (b) the *main loop*, which is executed once for each sample processed;
- (c) the *suffix*, which causes the main loop to be repeated the proper number of times, empties output buffers, fills input buffers, etc.

We will concern ourselves here only with the main loop. Except for some strictly local inner loops in certain boxes, this part of the object program is compiled in the same order in which it is to be executed. Simply stated, the procedure is as follows: One storage cell in the object program is assigned for each box. Each time the main loop is entered, these cells will contain values corresponding to the last *outputs* of the respective boxes. It is then the function of the main loop to compute these output values for the next (current) time slot and to fill the cells with these values.

In order to simplify the description of the algorithm used by the compiler we will at first limit ourselves to the case where all delays are unit delays. By "compiling a box" we mean writing the necessary coding to

cause the object program to fill the output cell of the box with the current pulse value. A nondelaying-type box cannot be compiled until all the boxes feeding it have been compiled. The reason is that the output of this type of box is a function of its current inputs, and this part of the object program must not be executed until the cells corresponding to input to this box have been filled with current pulse values. On the other hand, a unit delay must be compiled *before* the box which feeds it. Its output is a function of (equal to, in fact) its *last* or *old* input. At object time this value must be "moved along" before it is overwritten. To reword this second rule, no box which feeds a delay line can be compiled until that delay line has been. This second rule could be dropped if we provided an additional storage cell for each unit delay and had the object program first go through and fill each of these cells with the old input to the corresponding delay line. We will see below, however, that the only price we pay for the more efficient procedure is that the compiler will reject any block diagram containing a closed loop with nothing but delays. Such a diagram would represent an admissible circuit but would be of little value, since we could never get anything but zeros out of this loop at any point. (All delay lines are initialized at zero.)

The above two rules are effected in a fairly simple manner. A binary storage cell is assigned in the *compiler* program for each of the output cells in the *object* program. The two states of each of these cells are called "full" and "empty." Initially all cells which represent inputs to delay lines are marked "full" and all others marked "empty." A box can be compiled whenever its inputs are all marked "full" and its output "empty." When a box is compiled, its output is marked "full" and its inputs "empty." Compilation proceeds until all boxes have been compiled (successful compilation) or until no uncompiled box meets the two requirements. In the latter event the compiler prints the remark CLOSED LOOP WITH NO DELAYS OR ALL DELAYS and halts. To see that one of these conditions must prevail, note that a delay line can *always* be compiled unless it feeds another uncompiled delay line. Therefore, if any of the uncompiled boxes are delay lines there exists a closed loop with all delays. If, on the other hand, all uncompiled boxes are nondelaying, then each must have an empty input which must be the output of an uncompiled nondelaying box. Thus, working backwards, we find a closed loop with no delay.

The order of searching for uncompiled boxes which meet the tests is immaterial from a logical point of view, but this freedom can be used to optimize the use of the accumulator. By first trying to compile a box which is fed by the last compiled box, the compiler is sometimes able to save a "storage" or "fetch" order, or both. Delays are not, of course,

limited to unit delays as in the above discussion. A delay of length  $n$  sets  $n - 1$  storage cells in addition to its normal output cell. For short delays the data are "stepped along" a notch each time the main loop is executed. For longer delays the same effect is produced by address modification.

The above description is merely a sketch of the general procedure used by BLODI. Actually, it has a lot more structure of purely technical character. For example, some boxes are broken down into simpler boxes by the compiler so that parts of the object program concerning a given box may not appear in consecutive locations.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

BLODI has been in use at Bell Telephone Laboratories for about a year, mostly in the Department of Visual and Acoustics Research. It has been used chiefly for signal processing types of problems, and one of the authors has used the compiler to simulate a speech synthesizer of the resonant-vocoder type. It has also been used to study television coding schemes, artificial reverberation in acoustic research, and for part of the coding in a handwriting recognition problem.<sup>1</sup> In appraising its value one must consider two separate questions:

1. What type of problem is easily coded in the BLODI language?
2. What type of problem causes BLODI to write efficient object programs?

The first question will be answered relative to a programmer well versed in basic and Fortran language. Whenever the problem involves a rather smooth flow of data in and out of the machine, with the output being a nearly stationary function of the input, then it can be more easily coded in BLODI than in any other existing language. When, however, the program must process input samples in a complicated order, dependent on previous results, the BLODI language becomes unbearably awkward. (This is precisely the type of circuit which is hard to design with delay lines, switches, etc.)

The second question is easily answered. Any diagram which contains many idle boxes will be inefficient, because the object program goes through the motion of calculating the state of all boxes at each clock time. For example, a program with five memory-free (delay-free) paths, only one of which is connected to the output at any one time, would result in an inefficient object program. For diagrams containing few idle boxes, however, BLODI produces object programs which are usually as efficient as those written by a competent programmer.

The version of BLODI in use at Bell Telephone Laboratories is coupled to the monitor and I-O system, BE SYS 3. Thus an installation not us-





[illegible]

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PAGE 3
03152 0500 00 0 03101 L10 0x10
03153 0100 00 0 03151 T20 0x10
03154 0400 00 0 03150 S00 0x10
03155 0401 00 0 03101 S10 0x10
03156 0750 00 0 03000 P00 0x10
03157 0771 00 0 03020 W20 0x10
03158 0400 00 0 03140 S00 0x10
03159 0402 00 0 03102 S10 0x10
03160 0400 00 0 03200 S00 0x10
03161 0400 00 0 02780 R00 0x10
03162 0401 00 0 03102 S00 0x10
03163 0400 00 0 03140 T20 0x10
03164 0400 00 0 03102 L20 0x10
03165 0400 00 0 03102 L30 0x10
03166 0400 00 0 03102 L40 0x10
03167 0400 00 0 03102 L50 0x10
03168 0400 00 0 03102 L60 0x10
03169 0400 00 0 03102 L70 0x10
03170 0400 00 0 03102 L80 0x10
03171 0400 00 0 03102 L90 0x10
03172 0400 00 0 03102 L00 0x10
03173 0400 00 0 03102 L10 0x10
03174 0400 00 0 03102 L20 0x10
03175 0400 00 0 03102 L30 0x10
03176 0400 00 0 03102 L40 0x10
03177 0400 00 0 03102 L50 0x10
03178 0400 00 0 03102 L60 0x10
03179 0400 00 0 03102 L70 0x10
03180 0400 00 0 03102 L80 0x10
03181 0400 00 0 03102 L90 0x10
03182 0400 00 0 03102 L00 0x10
03183 0400 00 0 03102 L10 0x10
03184 0400 00 0 03102 L20 0x10
03185 0400 00 0 03102 L30 0x10
03186 0400 00 0 03102 L40 0x10
03187 0400 00 0 03102 L50 0x10
03188 0400 00 0 03102 L60 0x10
03189 0400 00 0 03102 L70 0x10
03190 0400 00 0 03102 L80 0x10
03191 0400 00 0 03102 L90 0x10
03192 0400 00 0 03102 L00 0x10
03193 0400 00 0 03102 L10 0x10
03194 0400 00 0 03102 L20 0x10
03195 0400 00 0 03102 L30 0x10
03196 0400 00 0 03102 L40 0x10
03197 0400 00 0 03102 L50 0x10
03198 0400 00 0 03102 L60 0x10
03199 0400 00 0 03102 L70 0x10
03200 0400 00 0 03102 L80 0x10
03201 0400 00 0 03102 L90 0x10
03202 0400 00 0 03102 L00 0x10

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[illegible][illegible]

[illegible][illegible][illegible]

Fig. 3 — Typical BLODI program: printed output.